

# Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry



*Presented by*  
Georgia Heard

## **Ten Lessons Poetry Can Teach Prose**

*"I went to the school of poetry in order to learn to write prose."  
Grace Paley*

**Images** – writing with picture words – show don't tell

**Metaphor/Simile** – saying things in a new way

**Details** – descriptive words – focus on the small particulars

**Word Awareness** – use unusual, surprising words –  
concrete words – sounds of words

**Trains Your Ear** – the music of words – what sounds "right"

**Patterns/Repetition** – repeating words and sentences

**Beginnings/Endings** – techniques for opening and closing  
the door of a poem for the reader

**Point of View** – trying on different points of view

**Voice** – personality behind the words

**Re-vision** – taking out unnecessary words – images –  
cracking open words and sentences

### **Poetry Invitation**

Valentine for Ernest Mann  
Naomi Shihab Nye

You can't order a poem like you order a taco.  
Walk up to the counter, say, "I'll take two"  
and expect it to be handed back to you  
on a shiny plate.

Still, I like your spirit.  
Anyone who says, "Here's my address,  
write me a poem," deserves something in reply.  
So I'll tell you a secret instead:  
poems hide. In the bottoms of our shoes,  
they are sleeping. They are the shadows  
drifting across our ceilings the moment  
before we wake up. What we have to do  
is live in a way that lets us find them.

Once I knew a man who gave his wife  
two skunks for a valentine.  
He couldn't understand why she was crying.  
"I thought they had such beautiful eyes."

And he was serious. He was a serious man  
who lived in a serious way. Nothing was ugly  
just because the world said so. He really  
*liked* those skunks. So, he re-invented them as valentines and they became  
beautiful.

At least, to him. And the poems that had been hiding  
in the eyes of skunks for centuries  
crawled out and curled up at his feet.

Maybe if we re-invent whatever our lives give us  
we find poems. Check your garage, the odd sock in your drawer, the person you  
almost like, but not quite

And let me know.

## **Poems for Young Poets**

Safety Pin by Valerie Worth

Closed, it sleeps  
On its side  
Quietly.  
The silver  
Image  
Of some  
Small fish;

Opened, it snaps  
Its tail out  
Like a thin  
Shrimp, and looks  
At the sharp  
Point with a  
Surprised eye.

Things

By Eloise Greenfield

Went to the corner  
Walked in the store  
Bought me some candy  
Ain't got it no more  
Ain't got it no more

Went to the beach  
Played on the shore  
Built me a sandhouse  
Ain't got it no more  
Ain't got it no more

Went to the kitchen  
Lay down on the floor  
Made me a poem  
Still got it  
Still got it

Poem by Langston Hughes

I loved my friend.  
He went away from me.  
There's nothing more to say.

The poem ends,  
Soft as it began -  
I loved my friend

Go Wind

by Lilian Moore

Go wind, blow  
Push wind, swoosh  
Shake things  
Take things  
Make things  
fly.

Ring things.  
Swing things.  
Fling things  
high.

Go wind, blow  
Push things - whew.  
No wind, no  
Not me -  
not me.

### **Perform a Poem**

**Memorize the poem and make a short (2 or 3 minute) creative presentation to the class.**

**Singing** – Sing the words of the poem.

**Dancing** – Do a dance inspired by the poem.

**Music** – Write or play a musical instrument inspired by the poem.

**Drama** – Act the poem out.

**Art** – Make a painting, drawing, collage, sculpture or photograph inspired by the poem.

**Rap** – Perform the poem as a rap.

**Cooking** – Create a recipe and cook something that relates to the poem.

**Photograph Album** – Create a short photograph album in response to the poem.

**Choral Reading** – Perform the poem as a choral reading

**Other Ideas:**

## **Multi-Genre Self Portrait Anthology**

For this project, you will be creating an anthology, a collection of work, which reflects who you are. Your anthology will contain pieces that show your personality, the things you love, and your beliefs. Your anthology will consist of several different genres. Some of the pieces will be originals that you create, and others will be items written by other authors that are meaningful to you and represent who you are. Although each person's anthology will be unique, they will all contain the following:

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For example:

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For example:

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- Quotes
- An excerpt from a memoir or short story
- Comics
- Song lyrics
- Figurative language (similes, metaphors, etc.)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Reflections

Each piece in the anthology needs to have a short reflection. This reflection will explain to the reader why you chose to include a piece in your anthology and how it connects to you. Therefore, you must carefully select each item that you place in your anthology.

**My People**

By Langston Hughes

**The night is beautiful,  
So the faces of my people.**

**The stars are beautiful,  
So the eyes of my people.**

**Beautiful, also, is the sun.  
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.**

**Crickets**

By Valerie Worth

**Crickets  
Talk  
In the tall  
Grass  
All  
Late summer  
Long.  
When  
Summer  
Is gone,  
The dry  
Grass  
Whispers  
Alone.**

**Surprise**

By Beverly McLoughland

**The biggest  
Surprise  
On the library shelf  
Is when you suddenly  
Find yourself  
Inside a book—**

**You wonder how  
The author knew.**

### **THE TREE ON THE CORNER**

I've seen  
the tree on the corner  
in spring bud  
and summer green.  
Yesterday  
it was yellow gold.

Then a cold  
wind began to blow.  
Now I know –  
you really do not see  
a tree  
until you see  
its bones.

*Lillian Moore*

### **FOGHORNS**

The foghorns moaned  
in the bay last night  
so sad  
so deep  
I thought I heard the city  
crying in its sleep

*Langston Hughes*

### **NEW SOUNDS**

New sounds to  
walk on  
today,  
  
dry  
leaves  
talking  
in hoarse  
whispers  
under bare trees.

*Lillian Moore*

### **UMBRELLAS**

It's raining in the city.  
I hope it rains for hours.  
All of the umbrellas  
Open up like flowers.

Come look out my window!  
Polka dots in lines  
Wag their stems and tangle,  
Tilt to read the signs.

Plaid ones cross at corners,  
Striped ones wave about.  
It's raining in the city;  
The flowers have come out.

*Maxine W. Kumin*

### **UNTIL I SAW THE SEA**

Until I saw the sea  
I did not know  
that wind  
could wrinkle water so,

I never knew  
that sun  
could splinter a whole sea

Nor did I know before,  
a sea breathes in and out  
upon a shore.

*Lillian Moore*



### **Choosing the Best Words**

**Directions:** Fill in the blank spaces with the “best” words you can think of. The “best” words are usually: surprising, imagistic, concise and musical. Then read the original poem and compare your choices with the poet’s.

Oil Slick by Judith Thurman

There, by the curb,  
a leaky truck  
has \_\_\_\_\_  
a grease-pool,

a black, pearly  
slick  
which \_\_\_\_\_  
when the sun  
strikes it.

I could spend  
all day  
\_\_\_\_\_  
its flashy colors  
with a stick.

## **Endings**

### Fueled

Fueled  
by a million  
man-made  
wings of fire –  
the rocket tore a tunnel  
through the sky –  
and everybody cheered.  
Fueled  
only by a thought from God –  
the seedling  
urged its way  
through the thickness of black –  
and as it pierced  
the heavy ceiling of the soil –  
and launched itself  
up into outer space –  
no  
one  
even  
clapped.

*Marice Hans*

### Poem

I loved my friend.  
He went away from me.  
There's nothing more to say.  
The poem ends,  
soft as it began -  
I loved my friend.

*Langston Hughes*

### My People

The night is beautiful,  
So the faces of my people.  
  
The stars are beautiful,  
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### **Poetry Books for Young Poets**

All the Small Poems and Fourteen More by Valerie Worth

Rich Lizard and Balloons and Other Poems by Deborah Chandra

Honey, I Love by Eloise Greenfield

I Feel the Same Way and I Thought I Heard the City by Lilian Moore

Creatures of Earth, Sea and Sky and This Place I Know: Poems of Comfort by Georgia Heard

Confetti: Poems for Children by Pat Mora

Lemonade Sun, The Spin of Things and Over in the Pink House by Rebecca Kai Dotlich

Spin a Soft Black Song by Nikki Giovanni

A Writing Kind of Day by Ralph Fletcher

There Was a Place and Other Poems (*out of print*) by Myra Cohn Livingston

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Children's Poetry Treasury selected by Jack Prelutsky

Frederick by Leo Lionni \*

The Other Way to Listen by Bryd Baylor \*

### **Poetry Books For Older Poets**

ten poems to change your life selected by Roger Housden

what have you lost? selected by Naomi Shihab Nye

Blushing collected by Paul Janeczko

Delights & Shadows by Ted Kooser

**Books by Georgia Heard**

For the Good of the Earth and the Sun, Heinemann, 1989

Writing Toward Home: Tales and Lessons to Find Your Way,  
Heinemann, 1995

Creatures of Earth, Sea and Sky, Boyds Mills Press, 1992

Words of True Poems: Poems on Audiotape, Heinemann, 1998

Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle  
School, Heinemann, 1999

Songs of Myself: Poetry and Art, Mondo, 2000

This Place I Know: Poems of Comfort, Candlewick, 2002

The Revision Toolbox: Teaching Techniques That Work,  
Heinemann, 2002

# Giving Students the Vision and Tools to Reach for Wider Possibilities As Writers



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## **Living with A Piece of Writing for One Week**

- 1. Monday: Close your eyes and listen:  
What do you notice about the piece?  
What does it make you feel?**
- 2. Tuesday: Illustrate a favorite scene or image.  
Why was it your favorite?**
- 3. Wednesday: In what way does this piece connect to your life? Bring in a personal connection artifact: a book; poem; photograph; letter, etc.**
- 4. Thursday: Share connections.**
- 5. Friday: Craft talk: What do you notice about how this piece is written: word choice; structure; imagery; point of view, etc.**

## **Things**

**By Eloise Greenfield**

**Went to the corner  
Walked in the store  
Bought me some candy  
Ain't got it no more  
Ain't got it no more**

**Went to the beach  
Played on the shore  
Built me a sandhouse  
Ain't got it no more  
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**Went to the kitchen  
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Shake things  
Take things  
Make things  
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Swing things.  
Fling things  
High.

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Push things – whew.  
No wind, no  
Not me -  
Not me.

## **Craft Talk**

Title and Author of Piece:

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This is part of the poem where the author did a wonderful job “showing” and not “telling.” What part of the poem did you see in your mind most clearly? What words gave you a vivid picture in your head?

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This is part of the poem where the author used vivid and/or unusual words. What words stood out for you? What strong verbs did she use? What strong adjectives did she use? What strong nouns did she use?

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Discuss the title of the poem, “Enchantment.” Why isn’t the poem called “June Bugs?”

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Discuss the beginning and the ending of the poem.

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## **Enchantment**

**By Joanne Ryder**

**On warm summer nights  
the porch becomes our living room  
where Mama takes her reading  
and Dad and I play games  
in the patch of brightness  
the lamp scatters on the floor.  
From the darkness, others come—  
small round bodies  
clinging to the screens  
which separate us  
from the yard beyond.  
Drawn to our light,  
the June bugs watch our games  
and listen to our talk till bedtime  
when Mama darkens the porch  
and breaks the spell  
that holds them close to us.**

## Writing Invitation

### From Writing Toward Home by Georgia Heard

#### *From an Onion to My Grandmother*

A year after my ninety-nine year old grandmother died I was sitting in the kitchen drinking tea and staring fixedly at the table on which were a few onions. I began to write in my journal about the onion in front of me: skin like paper, like the layers of rock in the Grand Canyon, layers of skin, my grandmother's soft, papery hands, my grandmother buried in the layers of earth and bone and other lives, my grandmother's face looking up out of the earth, her skin frozen.

When I finished I sat back a little startled. How had this journey happened – from an onion to my grandmother? I hadn't known I was still mourning my grandmother's death – but as I began to write about the onion I uncovered my grief. That morning I hadn't planned to write about my grandmother, let alone imagine her in a grave – but writing forged its own way through my psyche.

For many writers, freewriting or stream-of consciousness writing is the way to find the trail. This is especially true if we have negative memories of someone's harsh criticism, if we have writer's block, if we're afraid to write what we really feel, if we've lived the life of daily chores too intensely, or if we have lots of ideas but don't know how to begin.

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*Pick a word – a noun, something concrete – and put it at the top of the page. It could be an arbitrary word: Onion. Feather. River. Sponge. Or it could be something you need to think more deeply about: Father. Time. Love. Now begin to write everything that comes into your mind. Keep at it for at least two pages. Let yourself wander, anything – especially if it's bizarre and crazy – goes. Follow the path, and don't be afraid if it veers off somewhere else. Afterward, go back and jot down next to your freewriting the links, the journey from one thought to another. Uncover the connections that you made. After all, writing is meandering – sometimes a stroll, sometimes a fast walk – to a place of dreams, memories, and thoughts you didn't know existed.*